

A CHALLENGE AND A SHIELD

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A SERMON
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"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."
Romans 8:34

HERE are two very wonderful challenges thrown out by the Apostle Paul. First, he boldly defies anyone to charge the chosen of God with sin, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" and then, even if any charges should be brought against them, he defies all our foes to secure an adverse verdict, "Who is he that condemneth?"

This would be a very bold challenge even for a man who had been righteous from his youth up. If there had been a man in the history of the world, who from his infancy had known God, and who had grown up serving Him, devoting himself entirely to the cause of the Lord Christ, and if he had kept the commandments without fail, as far as man could judge, it would be a very hazardous thing even for him to say, "Who is he that condemneth?"

For human righteousness is only human, being human, it is finite, and being finite, it falls short somewhere or other. The best of men are but men at the best, to be a man is to be a fallen creature, and being fallen creatures, we cannot of ourselves perfectly please the thrice-holy JEHOVAH. In many things we all offend.

The man who uttered this challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" and uttered it under the inspiration of God, did not however, occupy the position of a sinless man. His early years had been spent in opposition to his Savior. He had been exceedingly mad against the disciples of Christ, and had persecuted them even unto strange cities. In another place he calls himself the very chief of sinners, and yet it is this man who dares to ask the question, "Who is he that condemneth?"

It is a bold, brave challenge, but it never could have been uttered by Paul if it had not been accompanied by the next sentence, "It is Christ that died." First, he flings down the gauntlet and challenges a battle, crying, "Who is he that condemneth?" And then he holds up a shield so broad that he is completely concealed behind it, and every enemy is defeated in the conflict, because "It is Christ that died."

Happy shall you and I be if, though covered with sin, though guilty and unclean, we nevertheless shall have faith to believe in the Christ that died, a faith so strong and confident that we shall dare to stand both now, and at the judgement seat of Christ and say, "Who is he that condemneth?"

May we have this faith on our dying bed, when the pulse is faint and feeble, and heart and flesh begin to fail! May we still, between the very jaws of death, have solid confidence in God, and dare to ask, in the presence of men and devils too, "Who is he that condemneth?" being made bold to do so because we have believed in the Christ that died.

Paul has in this case, only one answer to the question, "Who is he that condemneth?" He meets it by the blessed fact that "It is Christ that died." I recommend that we should, each one of us, have but one hope of salvation. As long as we have half-a-dozen, we have half-a-dozen doubtful ones, but when it comes to only one, and that such a sufficient one as the truth that "It is Christ that died," we have a well-founded hope in which we may rest with confidence. Such a hope as this is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," and the man who has this anchor on board the barque of his life can never suffer spiritual shipwreck.

When Emperor Charles the Fifth went to war with Francis the First, King of France, he sent a herald to him declaring war in the name of the Emperor of Germany, King of Castille, King of Aragon, King of Naples, King of Sicily, and he went on with many more titles, giving his sovereign all the honors that were his due.

When the herald of Francis the First took up the gage of battle, he would not be outdone in the list of honors, so he said, "I take up the challenge in the name of Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France; Francis the First, King of France." He just repeated his master's name and office as many times as the other gentleman had titles.

So it is a grand thing, whenever Satan comes and begins to accuse you, just to say, "Christ has died, Christ has died." If any confront you with other confidences, still keep to this almighty plea, "Christ has died." If one says, "I was christened and confirmed," answer him by saying, "Christ has died." Should another say, "I was baptized an adult," let your confidence remain the same, "Christ has died." When another says, "I am a sound, orthodox Presbyterian," you stick to this solid ground, "Christ has died." And if still another says, "I am a red-hot Methodist," answer him in the selfsame way, "Christ has died."

Whatever may be the confidences of others, and whatever may be your own, put them all away, and keep to this one declaration, "It is Christ that died." There is enough in that one truth to include all that is excellent in the others, and to answer all the accusations that may be brought against you. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." I would put the trumpet to my lips while I preach, and sound out this one note, praying that it may be a death-blast to all accusations that can be brought against believers in Christ.

I want you to notice that Paul does not even rest his confidence as to the believers' safety upon the fact that they are able to say, "We have trusted in Christ; we have loved Christ; we have served Christ." He allows nothing to mar the glory of this one blessed fact, "It is Christ that died." If he adds anything at all, it is still something about that same Christ—"yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

This is a subject upon which I delight to speak, for here is all my hope and confidence. In these words I see first, *a challenge to all comers*, "Who is he that condemneth?" Secondly, I see here, *a remedy for all sin*. If any take up the gage of battle and say, "We condemn you," we shall have this for our complete answer to every one, "It is Christ that died." And lastly, I see here, *an answer to every accusation* arising from sin. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

I. Here is A CHALLENGE TO ALL COMERS.

By the grace of God the apostle stands defiantly in the midst of all the believer's foes, and flings down the gauntlet before them all. The encounter to which he challenges them is not to be a mere tilt in a tournament, but a battle for life or death. Who enters the lists against the believer? First comes Satan, then the world, then conscience, and last of all the law of God. Over them all the believer triumphs. "It is Christ that died," becomes both his sword and his shield, and when the dread conflict is over, and even while it is raging, he sings, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The first who takes up the believer's challenge is *Satan*. Some do not believe in the personality of the devil, but I am as sure of it as I am of the personality of his children who deny their own father. Those of us who have passed through any spiritual conflicts know that Satan is a terribly real personage.

He attacks us on the right hand and on the left, from beneath and from above. Very dexterously, with infernal malice, he endeavors to condemn the child of God. It is his business to be the accuser of the brethren, and he carries it on with very great vigor. He knows enough of our conduct to be able, truthfully, to bring to our memory much that might condemn us. When this fails, he never sticks at an accusation because it does not happen to be true. Being the father of lies, he will accuse us of things of which we are not guilty, or when it suits his purpose, he will exaggerate our guilt, and make it appear worse than it is, in order that he may drive us to despair.

There is only one way to successfully resist the onset of the arch-enemy, but that one way ensures certain victory. Up with your shield and say, "Yes, it is all true, or it might have been, for my heart is so evil that it would have led me to any sin, but 'It is Christ that died.'" This will defeat your great adversary.

Suppose Satan should come to anyone who is seeking the Savior and say, "You will never find the Lord, you have sinned beyond all limit, you are too far gone for mercy to reach you, you must perish," it will be your highest wisdom to give him this one reply, "It is Christ that died." That short sentence completely answers all his accusations.

There is no terror to him like the terror of the cross. He gloated over the crucifixion once, and he has been distressed and terrified by it ever since. Tell him that you are a sinner, and that if he should paint your sin in its blackest colors, you would not even then despair, for it would still be true that Christ "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

Christ has died and there is more than enough virtue in His death to atone for the blackest or most crimson sins ever committed by men. Close beside the bottomless pit of our iniquity stands the cross whereon Christ has made recompense for all our faults, and when we set Christ over against the gulf of our sin, we see that He far transcends it. Sin is great, but Christ is greater. His precious blood takes away every stain of guilt.

Take care that you do not answer Satan with any other argument than this, "It is Christ that died." Again and again let this blow, from the sword of the Spirit, descend upon him, "It is Christ that died," and you will soon be acclaimed the victor over your greatest foe. In this way, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

When you have overcome Satan, *the world* will come forth to attack you, and to dispute your claim to be numbered amongst the people of God. As long as you go with evil companions, they will applaud you. You will be "a jolly good fellow" while you join them in their folly, but when you give up their ways, their habits, and their society, then they will say that you are melancholy and no longer fit company for such, "hail fellows, well met," and they will turn away from you.

If you follow after Christ and find eternal life, when they hear of it, they will sneer at you and bring up all your past life against you. They will say, "What! *you* converted? You are as bad as any one of us. What! *you* a saint? Well, certainly, you made no pretension to it six months ago, you were about as black as a man could be." The world will begin to throw in the believer's teeth all his former iniquities, when he sets forth with the cry, "Who is he that condemneth?"

Tell the world, once for all, that it may condemn you if it pleases, for it condemned the Lord Jesus long ago, and say that therefore, you think but little of the condemnation of your fellow men. Tell the men of the world that it is right that they should condemn you for all your past life, for doubtless you have been what they say you are, you will not dispute that fact, but tell them also that what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth is true of you, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Tell even them that Christ died. If they say that Christ's death does not repair the injury you have done to your fellow men, tell them that, as far as you can, you mean to make restitution to them, and wherein you have done the world an ill turn, let them know that your Master has done it more good than you ever did it harm. The influence of His holy religion has made abundant atonement to the world for any wrong that you ever did to it. He has rendered more of good to men than you ever rendered of evil.

In all your answers to the accusations of the world, take care that you base your hopes concerning forgiven sin upon the death of Christ. The world will, before long, understand what you mean by saying that Christ has made atonement for your sin, and perhaps, here and there, a few of those who ridiculed you will be inclined to know more about this matter, and in private may come and ask you how the death of Christ has saved your soul. At any rate, meet the attack of the world as you met the attack of Satan, with this weapon only, "It is Christ that died," and you will be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

The third foe that will seek to condemn you, and one that you have great cause to fear, is *your own conscience*, but the weapon which has discomfited your other foes will also avail you against this one. Still, this foe is fierce and terrible. Let me feel the worm that never dies rather than the stings of an offended conscience, if indeed this is not itself “the worm that dieth not.”

Fire such as martyrs felt at the stake were but a plaything compared with the flames of a burning conscience. We read that when David had cut off a piece Saul’s skirt, “It came to pass afterward that David’s heart smote him.” It is an ugly knock that a man’s heart gives when it smites him. There is no getting away from yourself, and when you condemn yourself, then you are condemned indeed.

You go to your bed, but your conscience is there, and it will not sleep. You go out to your pleasures, but your conscience goes with you, and spoils your mirth. You would forget your guilt in your daily business, but your conscience calls out at such a rate that there is no hearing anything else. Thunderbolts and tornadoes are nothing in force compared with the charges of a guilty conscience.

What is to be done when a man condemns himself? Can he still be valiant and maintain his ground, calling out, “Who is he that condemneth?” Yes, blessed be God, even this foe can be overcome by the weapon the believer wields in the power of God, for he can tell conscience, as he told his former opponents, “It is Christ that died.”

It is a wonderful story—this old, old story of Jesus and His love to guilty sinners, let me tell it once again. God so loved me that He willed to forgive me, but for the sake of the world which He governs righteously He could not forgive me without an atonement for my sin. It would not have been consistent with His justice for Him to pass by my sin. What was to be done?

His own dear Son came and stood in my place, and took my sin upon Him. Knowing that my sin deserved death, He willingly died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring me to God. God is well pleased with the death of Christ as the vindication of His justice, and for Christ’s sake He says to me, “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” Tell conscience that Christ has died for your sins, according to the Scriptures, and it will be perfectly satisfied, it will not go to sleep, but it will use its voice for other purposes, and it will no longer seek to condemn you.

There is still another foe that answers your challenge, “Who is he that condemneth?” Forth it steps into the arena, and we behold *the law of God*. What shall we say to that? The law of God says, “Thou shalt,” and we have not done what it commands. The law of God says, “Thou shalt not,” and we have done exactly what we were forbidden to do. Only too true is that confession, “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us.”

The law of God condemned us in former days, and would again overthrow us if we ventured to meet it unarmed. It must condemn sin, for “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” But when it has attacked us, and done its worst, there comes in the majesty of divine sovereignty. God is King over all, and able to govern the world according to His own mind, which mind is always infinitely just. He decrees that Christ Jesus, the Well-beloved, even His own other self, who is one with Him, should come into the world, and bear the sin of man, make amends to the injured honor of God, and magnify the law before the eyes of the whole universe.

If the guilty sinner dies, the law is honored, but if God shall assume human flesh, and die for that sinner, the law is even more honored. When Christ Jesus took away our guilt, and “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” justice was more terribly displayed than when guilty sinners sink to hell. We are only creatures after all, and when we are condemned, we sink down into destruction, and suffer for our sin, but He is the eternal God, and when He takes our nature and cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and bleeds His life away in agony, then is the law of God abundantly honored.

Therefore do we say to that law, “Law, you have nothing to do with me, I am ‘not under law, but under grace.’ My Substitute has kept the law on my behalf. He has borne the penalty which I ought to

have borne, and I am clear. I am now dead to the law. I have died in Christ, and my life now is that of a child of God, for I have been lifted to that high estate by my redeeming Lord.”

There is now nobody left that I know of, that can condemn us, except the Judge, and if we have escaped our opponents—Satan, the world, conscience, and the law, we need not fear to stand even at God’s judgment seat. The Judge is now on our side, and none of us need fear anybody’s condemnation if the Judge does not condemn us.

You come into court with your case, and the counsel on the other side condemns you. When he sits down, he has done his worst, and his witnesses also condemn you, but if the verdict is in your favor, and the judge says that you may leave the court with a stainless character, you do not care about the condemnation of others.

Now, there is but one Judge—the man Christ Jesus. It is He that died for us. He cannot bring us in debt to divine justice, for in His own hands and feet are the nail-prints, which are the receipts of justice in full settlement of all claims against us. He has paid all we owed and He will vindicate His own death, and claim for the travail of His soul its due reward, which is the forgiveness and the salvation of all guilty men who have come and put their trust in Him.

Wherefore, since it is only our Judge who can condemn us, and since He is the very Person who has paid our debt for us, and put our sin away, we dare to repeat again, with additional emphasis, our ringing challenge to all the universe, “Who is he that condemneth?”

*“Who now accuseth them,
For whom their Ransom died?
Who now shall those condemn
Whom God has justified?
Captivity is captive led;
For Jesus liveth, who was dead.”*

II. In the second place, I see in our text A REMEDY FOR ALL SIN.

On this I shall speak very briefly. We stand boldly in front of all our foes because we know that we are free from the evil which once condemned us, it is all gone. Our confidence is therefore strong, and it is so because Christ’s dying has removed all sin from all believers.

“Look,” says one, “*there is sin*. It is true that you are a believer, but you have sinned often, for years, in all sorts of ways.” Yes, as we look, we must confess that it is true, there is the sin. But *yonder is the Savior*, and He is called Jesus, “For he shall save his people from their sins.” He has come on purpose to put away our sin, and when He died, He made an end of it. The answer, therefore, to the statement, “There is sin,” is this, “Christ has died.”

Another says, “Yes, but then you have been especially guilty, *there is great sin* against a great God. You have continued in it, and persisted in it.” True, we do confess that accusation, but then *there is a great sacrifice*, for He that came to save us, laid down His life for us, and greater sacrifice than this could never be. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” This is the grandest message of the Gospel, that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

The apostle Paul puts this “first of all,” and every true preacher of the good tidings of salvation will follow his example. We have indeed, in the death of Christ, a great atonement, an atonement so great, that none can measure its height and depth, its length and breadth. The glory of the Person who died, the anguish and the suffering He endured, the love that moved Him to give Himself up to death for us, all make us see how great the atonement is. There is great sin, that we know only too well, but we also rejoice in the knowledge that there is a great atonement to cover all our sin, “For it is Christ that died.”

“But,” interrupts another, “*God must punish sin*. It is not optional with Him, it is an inevitable law of the universe. Transgress the law, and punishment will follow.” It is even so, but listen, God must punish sin, and *God has punished sin*. He took the great mass of the sins of believers, and piled the whole on

Christ, and when He hung upon the cross as His people's Substitute, even His Father hid His face from Him. He died, the Prince of glory died the ignominious felon's death, in the room and place and stead of guilty men. God *has* punished sin, and when men say, "God must punish sin," we answer, "Sin has been punished, for Christ has died."

Not only is our sin punished, but *the sin is gone*. If my friend over yonder has paid my debt, it is gone. I owe no man anything after the debt has been paid, whether by myself, or by somebody else, and if Christ took our sin upon Himself, and suffered for it, the sins for which He suffered are gone, plunged as in a shoreless sea, drowned in the Redeemer's blood. They are gone, and gone for ever!

*"He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."*

And that my sins are gone is further clear, for He rose again from the dead. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." If He had not paid the debt, He would have remained in the prison of the grave, but He rose again. He has discharged the debt, and we have still another assurance that it is all gone, for the apostle goes on to speak of Christ "who is even at the right hand of God." He would not be there if He were a debtor. If Christ owed anything to the justice of God by reason of His suretyship engagements, He would not be at God's right hand, but He owes nothing whatever.

Both the sinner and the Surety are now free. The debt is paid, and Christ is at the right hand of God. And as to our weaknesses and infirmities, He is there to plead for His people, "Who also maketh intercession for us." He ever lives to secure effectually the eternal salvation of every soul for whom He died, even for every one who puts His trust in Him.

Are you among the number? Oh, if you, my dear hearers, knew the joy and peace that would come to you if you but trusted in the doctrine of substitution, you would not rest until you were able to say, "Christ was in my place, that I might stand in His place, my sins were laid on Him, that His righteousness might be girded on me."

If you understood how delightful it is to get out of yourself into Christ, and to live because Jesus died, you would not linger, and doubt, and fear, but you would say, "If it be so, I will come to Christ, and I will trust Him, that with you I may say, 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with His stripes we are healed.'" This, then is God's great remedy for sin, "It is Christ that died."

III. Now I want your attention while I try to show that this blessed sentence, "It is Christ that died," is AN ANSWER TO EVERY ACCUSATION which, under any circumstances, may arise from sin.

We have seen that Christ's death enables us to conquer our foes, and frees us from our sins. It also delivers us from every fear and doubt. The death of Christ gives us a full salvation. I cannot mention all the accusations which sin makes, but I will mention a great many of them very quickly, and show how the man who believes in Christ, the dying Christ, the risen Christ, the reigning Christ, is able to meet and overcome them.

Sometimes the accusing whisper comes to your ear, "*You have sinned against a great God*. It will be a terrible thing to have to answer to the great and mighty God for having so sinned." I will make no answer to that accusation but this, "It is Christ that died." Christ Himself, the great and mighty God, is the "Interpreter, one among a thousand," able to stand between me and God. It is true that God is great, but He cannot ask for more than divine righteousness, and in Christ I present that. Nay, His law never asked for more than human righteousness. I give him Christ's righteousness, which is a righteousness divine.

The law of God has therefore, more than it asked for, and I am thus not afraid of the anger of the great God. It is the mighty God Himself who came here to be a Man, and to die in our stead, for is it not written that God hath bought His people with His own blood? We read of "the church of God, which he

hath purchased with his own blood.” It is a strong expression, but as it is Scriptural, we cannot alter it, and we have no wish to do so.

Oh, beloved, if we have a God for our Redeemer, though our sins against God be very many, and though they be very black and foul, yet Christ’s infinite sacrifice meets them all.

*“Love of God, so pure and changeless,
Blood of God, so rich and free,
Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
Magnify them all in me,
Even me.”*

“*You have robbed God of His glory,*” another voice seems to say. “You know how you used to blaspheme His name.” Or perhaps, you were more polite, you did not curse and swear, but the accusation comes, “You argued against God and His Son, and against His blessed Gospel, you have robbed Him of His glory.” To that I give the same answer, “It is Christ that died.” I know that I have robbed God of His glory, but Christ has brought all the glory back. I see “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

A dying Savior brings more glory to the love of God, ay, and to the justice of God, than any mortal sinner could have done, more than any perfect man, though he lived throughout eternity, could have done. Thus, that doubt is answered by the same all-powerful argument, “It is Christ that died.”

“*But you have sinned willfully,*” says the upbraiding accuser. “You went after evil with all your heart, you know what you did. As a young man, you were a ringleader in evil. You were not one that stirred up and led by others, you led other people. You drank down sin as the greedy ox drinks water.” True, true, I sinned willfully, but then my Lord Jesus came willingly to stand in my stead. He willingly died for me, the willful sinner. He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again, of His own free will He went to prison and to death, for His people’s sake. So the evil wrought by my free will is met and covered by the sovereign obedience of His free will, “It is Christ that died.”

“Ah!” says the accuser, “*but you sinned against light and knowledge.* You cannot deny it. When you sinned, you were not like the common people of the street who know no better. You had a godly father, you had a Christian mother, you were trained in the fear of God. You read your Bible in early youth, and you went astray with a vengeance, for when you sinned, you knew that you were sinning, and yet you transgressed.” Yes, I know that it was so, I will not debate about it, I will only say, “It is Christ that died,” and Christ, to meet my sin against knowledge brings a sacrifice offered with His own full knowledge of all that it involved.

*“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”*

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,” poured out water and began to wash His disciples’ feet, and then went, with full knowledge of all that was before Him, to pour out His blood to wash their souls from guilt. In the midst of His agony on the tree, He still had full understanding concerning His sacrifice, “Knowing that all things were now accomplished,” He bowed His head and died. Thus my ill knowledge is met by the great and heavenly knowledge with which He went about the work of offering a complete atonement in my place. “It is Christ that died.”

“Ay, ay!” says yet another accuser, “*but you have sinned with delight.* You took a pleasure in it. You were not as some who were mere drudges to sin. You drank it down like sweet wine, and you could not have too much of it.” Ah! it is so, but then my Lord Christ delighted to come to be my Savior. In the volume of the Book it is written of Him, “I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my

heart.” I took pleasure in sin, but “He, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” Therefore, over against my delight in sin, I set His delight in presenting to the Father His perfect righteousness and His all-sufficient substitutionary sacrifice, “It is Christ that died.”

I do not seem to want to preach. I want to sit down, and suck all the sweetness out of this blessed truth, “It is Christ that died.” Ah! but another bitter taunt comes to me, “*You have sinned in spirit*. You not only sinned with your body, with your eyes, your lips, your hands, but you have sinned in imagination and desire very horribly.”

Ah, brethren! here we must bow our heads. All manner of evil things we commit in our thoughts, sin runs riot in our spirit. Well, we confess that too, but then Christ suffered in His spirit. The sufferings of His soul were the very soul of His sufferings. He not only groaned in body, when beaten by the Roman soldiers, and pierced with nails and thorns, but in soul He was overwhelmed by exceeding heaviness, and by the desertion of His God. To atone for the sin of my soul there is the sorrow of His soul, if I poured out my soul in sin, He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors. “It is Christ that died.”

If the black thought then comes up, “Ah! but *you have aforesaid refused Christ*. Many times you put Him away. You quenched conscience. You went to the house of God, not to pray, but to laugh. Ay, and when Christ would have pulled you away, you held hard onto your sin! You long rejected Christ.” Yes, but I set over against that the fact that He always would have me. He loved me to death, and albeit that He foresaw and foreknew that I should reject Him, yet He would not take “No” for an answer from me, but He resolved that His true grace should conquer me truly, and make me willing in the day of His power.

Still the accuser continues reminding us of our past life, “*You have trusted in others*, and turned away from Christ, you went everywhere before you came to Him.” Did you ever need to hire a horse in a market town? You went to some place and asked the price, and thought it too high, then you went away to half-a-dozen other stable keepers, and could not do any better, so you came back to the first, but he, displeased with you, very possibly said, “I do not want your custom. You have been to everybody else, you may go to them now.”

I have known a surly man act in that way, but Christ never turns us away because we only come to Him when others fail us. Many have gone round the world to look for a savior other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and they have only come to Him when all others have failed them.

It is astonishing where men will go to seek salvation. Some go to Rome, and some to Oxford, some go I know not where. They seek in vain, for there is no Savior to be found except at Calvary, and after you have made the circuit of the globe, and compassed heaven and hell to find another way of salvation, you will have to come back to Christ. Blessed be His name, He will not refuse you even then, if you will but believe Him! The proof of love to the uttermost is that “It is Christ that died.”

But I feel a darkness coming down over my spirit, and in the darkness there is a fiendish voice that says, “But *you have committed unknown sins*, sins that nobody else knows, and there have been sins which you yourself did not know. Hidden in your heart there is a damning spot which your eye has not discovered.” Here comes in this blessed word taken out of the Greek litany, “By thine unknown sufferings.” It is almost as good as Scripture, for Scripture leads us to think of the sufferings of Christ as an unfathomable deep.

Who can tell us what Christ’s suffering really was? It goes into the region of things unknown, it goes beyond the knowable, for flesh and blood will never be able to comprehend what Jesus suffered when the great flood of human sin came rushing down upon Him, and filled His spirit to the brim. “It is Christ that died.” My unknown sins are buried in the unknown deeps of His almighty sacrifice.

Ah! but another thought comes up, “You know that He died, but then *you have slain your Lord*. You had a share in His death. You know that every sinner is guilty of the murder of Christ.” I know it, I know it to my shame and confusion, yet do I live by Him I slew, I am saved by Him I murdered, and I glory in the grace that makes such a miracle of mercy possible.”

*“With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is filled,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by Him I killed.”*

Whether it was by mine or by any other wicked hands, yet it was by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” that Jesus died in the stead of all who believe in Him, I believe in Him, therefore He has died for me. He died for His murderers, for those that mocked and insulted Him, for He commanded His disciples to begin preaching the Gospel at Jerusalem, where they crucified Him, to preach it even to those who had hounded Him to His doom. O dear friends, what comfort lies in this word, “It is Christ that died”!

“Ah!” says the accuser, but *you are still sinful*. What if Christ died for all your past sins? What about your present sinfulness?” Well, about that, I have this to say, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

I believe that when Christ died, He took all the sins of all His people, past, present, and to come, and when the whole mass was condensed into one bitter cup, He drank it all up—

“At one tremendous draught of love,”

leaving not so much as a single drop of wormwood or gall for any to drink who put their trust in Him.

Come, my hearer, if what I say to you be true (and I will answer for its truth at God’s great judgement seat), then I pray you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for “He that believeth in Him shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.” I am in this boat myself. If it sinks, I am lost, but it will not sink, for the Pilot of the Galilean Lake is on board.

Come in with me, let us sail together to glory. I will not say, “Let us sink or swim together,” for there is no sinking to a soul that rests in Christ. This is a good seaworthy vessel, “It is Christ that died.” God has accepted Christ in the place of His people, and you, accepting Christ to stand in your stead, shall find that your sin is put away, that His righteousness is yours, and that you are “accepted in the Beloved.”

I have once more preached the Gospel to you as plainly and as simply as I can. Whether you will receive it or not, must rest with yourselves. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to trust in “Christ that died”! God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 8:26-39

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—537, 553, 297

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

MY DEAR READERS—Your weekly preacher is still weakly, but though his progress towards strength is slow, it has been steadily maintained during the late trying weather. When we consider how many have died, your chaplain is very grateful to be alive, to be able to send forth his usual discourse from the press, and to be, as he hopes, half an inch nearer to his pulpit. Happy will he count himself when he is able to preach with the living voice.

Would it not be well for all the churches to hold special meetings for prayer concerning the deadly scourge of influenza? The suggestion has, no doubt, been made by others, but I venture to press it upon Christians of all denominations that they may, in turn, urge all their pastors to summon such meetings. Our nation is fast learning to forget God. In too many instances ministers of religion have propagated doubt, and the result is a general hardening of the popular feeling, and a greatly increased neglect of public worship. It is written, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will

learn righteousness.” Let us, who believe in inspired Scripture, unite our prayers that it may be even so. With a court and a nation in deepest mourning, it is a time to cry mightily unto the Lord.

I have been able again to revise a sermon without assistance. It is upon Psalm 105:37, and if the Lord will, it will be published next week.

Yours, in deep sympathy with all the sick and the bereaved,

C. H. Spurgeon,

Mentone, January 17, 1892

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.